

August 2, 2020

Bible Passage: Acts 19; Ephesians 1
(Paul in Ephesus)

God Calls Us His Own

REMEMBER VERSE

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

Acts 4:12

SCHEDULE

CONNECT

GATHER

RESPOND

BLESS

Leader Prep

Each week you'll find a list of resources along with encouraging articles that help you prepare your heart to present the lesson.

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

My husband and I had been married for a few years when we started talking about starting a family. But the more we talked about it, the more loudly we felt God telling us something we hadn't expected: Our child was already alive, out there somewhere in the world, waiting for a mom and a dad. We began pursuing adoption.

Knowing our child wasn't home yet created a longing and an ache in my heart. I hadn't met my child, but the love I felt was deeper than I ever thought possible. I desperately wanted my child home with us.

In the midst of this journey, God's love became more real to me than ever. If I could feel this kind of love for a child I hadn't met yet, then God must feel a love for me that I could never imagine. He must want me with Him so badly that He would do anything, and stop at nothing, to seek me out and claim me as His own. Wow!

I cannot wait for the day when I get to look at my beautiful child in the face and say, "We love you so much that we sought you out. You are our child." I'm pretty sure God has been saying the same thing to me for longer than I know. My identity comes from being His beloved, desired, pursued child. God calls me His own!

Laura Weber
ROCKHARBOR Church

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

Much of the content of Paul's letter to the Ephesians focuses on the believer's identity in Christ. In chapter 1, Paul encourages them to rejoice in their identity; in chapter 2, he asks them to remember where they came from (what they have been saved from); in chapters 3 through 5, he exhorts them to live as "children of light" (5:8) and to live up to the calling they have received. In chapter 6, he asks them to remember that the enemy will try to break them down, destroy the unity of the body of Christ, and make them stray from the glorious calling they have received in Christ.

Why did Paul spend so much time discussing the idea of identity in his letter to the Ephesians? Ephesus was the third most populated city in the Roman Empire, on a bustling trade route. It was wealthy, important, and cosmopolitan. Because of this, the Ephesians' identity in Christ might have warred against the lure of money, prestige, or power.

In addition, because of the Roman fascination with Greek culture, Ephesus was Hellenized (turned Greek) under Roman rule. Temples dedicated to Greek gods were built, and much of Greek culture and philosophy were incorporated into Ephesian life. The Ephesian people were surrounded by the lifestyle and culture of pagan worship.

For these possible reasons, God inspired Paul to write this impassioned and beautiful letter. God gave Paul the words to speak the truth about who we are in Christ: “dearly loved children ... [chosen] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 5:1; 1:4). These words resonate with us today. It is still astounding that through Christ we’re able to “live as children of light” (5:8).

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

The first chapter of Ephesians is essentially one unbroken thought—an overflow of powerful emotion. It is Paul’s impassioned declaration, full of faith and joy at the free, lavish gift he received in Christ.

Read through Ephesians 1. Then read it again and pray “that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance” (Ephesians 1:18). Pray God will give you a similar overwhelming sense of joy at the knowledge of the salvation that you have in Christ.

In the same way that Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus, pray for your kids. Pray God will fill them up with a sense of joy from the glorious gift of Himself that He freely offers. Pray they will be overwhelmed with joy because they know they have been chosen to be His own.

CONNECT// 10 min.

Children develop relationships with their leaders and one another through simple activities and conversation starters.

Who Is It?

In this activity, students will guess the identities of various people.

SUPPLIES

- Paper (approx. 5 sheets)
- Scissors
- Pens
- Bowl or basket
- Stopwatch

PREPARE AHEAD

Cut the paper into small horizontal strips. Make three strips for each child.

RELATE

CONNECT QUESTION: Welcome and greet students. Open your time by asking this question: **What is something for which you’re known?**

Other people know us for different things—maybe for our curly hair, or our happy laugh, or how we’re good at soccer. Today we’ll try to guess the identities of different people from descriptions of

them.

To begin, divide your class into two teams. Then have each child take three strips of paper and a pen. Invite each child to write down a name on each strip. Names can be historical figures, friends, musicians, or even celebrities. Then the kids can fold their papers in half and put them in the bowl or basket.

Choose one team to go first, and ask that team to pick one player to go first. That player will draw a name from the bowl and have one minute to describe that person without saying the person's name. If the player doesn't know the name on the paper, he'll have to be creative and use other words to try to describe the person. If the player's teammates guess the person being described, they get to keep the paper. If there's still time left, the player will draw another name from the bowl and describe that person. After one minute, the other team gets a turn. The teams will continue taking turns until all of the names have been guessed. The team with the most strips of paper wins the round.

Then invite both teams to put the papers back into the bowl and play another round. This time the players will have to act out the names on the strips without using any words. After this round, if you have time for a third round, the teams will have to describe each name by saying only one word.

GATHER// 30 min.

*Children experience and learn more about God through memorizing Scripture, storytelling from *The Big God Story*, prayer, and discussion.*

Remember Verse

Each week children will spend time memorizing a portion of Scripture together. The Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of *The Big God Story*.

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

Game: Writing Race

SUPPLIES

- Table
- Chairs (1 per child)
- Paper (2–4 sheets)
- Pencil or pen
- **Timer**

RELATE

Have the kids sit around a table. Review the verse a few times with the class. Then give one student in the circle a sheet of paper and a pencil or pen. When you say, "Go!" start the timer and have the student write the first word of the verse on the paper and then pass the paper and pen to the kid on his right. That student will write the next word of the verse and pass the paper and pen to the student on her right. Have kids continue to pass around the paper and pen until they've written all of the words of the verse. Then stop the timer. Check to see if the verse is written correctly, make any corrections if needed, and then read the verse aloud. Challenge the

class to another round to see if they can beat their first time.

Storytelling

Bible Passage: Acts 19; Ephesians 1

Storytelling Technique: Categorizing Images

God Calls Us His Own

SUPPLIES

- Bibles
- Magazines (3–4, include both popular magazines and family or Christian magazines)
- Scissors
- Poster board (2 sheets) or butcher paper (2 pieces, each approx. 2')
- Marker
- Tape
- Glue sticks (2–3)

PREPARE AHEAD

Using the magazines, cut out a variety of images of things that relate to what the world finds important versus what God finds important. For example, you can cut out images of cars, money, travel, beauty supplies, music, celebrities, makeup, etc. Also cut out images of families, friends, nature, Bibles, churches, smiling people, sad people, hurting people, etc. Make sure you have enough for each child to have at least one image, preferably two. On one of the poster boards or pieces of butcher paper, write “World’s Own” across the top. On the other, write “God’s Own” across the top.

SET UP

Place the poster boards on the bulletin board or on the table in your room. Set the marker, images, and glue sticks nearby.

RELATE

Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds. **What is the farthest away you’ve ever traveled?** Invite the kids to respond. **You’ve been to some interesting places! After Jesus rose from the dead and rose up to heaven, The Big God Story started to spread to many places because Paul, as well as Jesus’ other disciples, wanted everyone to know Jesus’ message. They traveled to places such as Antioch, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Athens.**

The next stop on Paul’s journey was the city of Ephesus. Ephesus was a beautiful city with many rich people. The Ephesians had many nice things. They worshipped many false gods and didn’t believe in the one true God. The Ephesians thought that sports and beauty and money were some of the most important things in life. Many people today think that way too. What are some of the things that people today think are most important? Invite kids to respond. **Good thoughts! Things such as movies, being beautiful, nice cars, or lots of money. These are things the world, or the culture around us, finds important.** Invite the kids to look through the magazine images that you cut out. Invite a few volunteers to come glue some of the images that relate to things the world considers important to the “World’s Own” board.

When Paul went to Ephesus, he shared the truth about Jesus with the Ephesians. Many listened and believed in Jesus and the salvation He offers. After a while, Paul had to leave and go to another city. Without Paul there, some of the new believers in Jesus had a hard time staying strong in their identity

in Christ. It was tough to stay righteous without Paul teaching and guiding them.

What does *identity* even mean? Invite the kids to respond. **Our identity is who we are! Sometimes, like the Ephesians, we think our identity is in how good we are at sports or school or how good-looking we are. But God says our identity is found in Him. When we choose to trust and obey Jesus, the truest thing about us is what He says about us. God created us in His image, and we belong to Him.** Invite kids to look through the pictures and glue some images that represent our identity in Christ on the “God’s Own” board—for example, Bibles, churches, friends, crosses, smiling faces, etc.

God called the Ephesians His very own. And God encouraged Paul to write a letter to the Ephesians so that they could be reminded of this—of their identity as God’s own children, made in His image. We still have Paul’s letter today—it’s the book of Ephesians in our Bibles. Invite the kids to turn to the book of Ephesians in their Bibles. If you have an image of a Bible, invite a child to glue it to the “God’s Own” board. If not, write “Ephesians” on that board.

Paul wanted to remind the Ephesians that their identity was in Jesus because of His great love for them. Read Ephesians 1:4–7 aloud while the students follow along. **Because of Jesus, we are God’s own people. He adopts us as His own children! Do any of you know anyone who was adopted?** Invite the kids to respond. **What an amazing love—parents who choose to make a child their very own! This is exactly what God did for us through Jesus.** Invite a few volunteers to come glue images of families to the “God’s Own” board.

Paul encouraged the believers and reminded them of the good news about Jesus. Read verse 13 aloud while the students follow along. **The believers had heard the gospel and received Jesus. God gave them His Holy Spirit to live inside of them—they could find their identity in Him!**

Paul wrote this letter to remind the Ephesians of God’s truth. But this letter is still useful to us today! It is a great reminder of how Jesus came to die for us. He chose us as His own children, and He gives us His Holy Spirit so that we can live for Him and find our identity in Him. Our identity doesn’t come from our money or our grades or how good we are at sports. Ask a few volunteers to glue the remaining “worldly” images to the “World’s Own” board.

Our identity is in our relationship with Jesus! He has saved us and calls us His children. What an amazing God we serve! Consider sharing a time when you recognized your identity in Christ. As you do, glue a few key images from your story on the “God’s Own” board. Then invite a couple of volunteers to share a time they recognized their identity as God’s children. You can write down key words as they share as well, or invite them to come glue related images to the “God’s Own” board.

Discussion Questions

- **Why did Paul write a letter to the Ephesians?**
- **What were some of the things the Ephesians found their identity in?** (money, beauty, etc.)
- **What made the Ephesian believers God’s children?** Ephesians 1:15
- **What marks believers in Jesus?** Ephesians 1:13
- **How does it make you feel to know God calls you His own?**
- **How can we fight against the lies of the enemy?**

RESPOND// 15 min.

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond to God through creative activities and games.

Letters of Identity

Students will look at what God says about identity and write down words that express who God says they are.

SUPPLIES

- Paper (1 sheet per child)
- Envelope (1 per child, letter-sized)
- Pens

RELATE

What are some things that make you unique? Invite responses. **Those are great thoughts. Paul wrote a letter to the Ephesian church to encourage them and remind them of their new identity in Christ. When we choose to follow Jesus, we receive a brand-new identity that says we belong to God!**

Encourage the kids to close their eyes and listen carefully as you read Ephesians 1:3–10. When you're finished, invite kids to think about the passage. Ask and discuss the following question: **What does God say about who you are?**

Encourage the kids to spend some time in prayer and reflection about what it means to have their identity in Christ and who God has uniquely made them to be. Then give a sheet of paper, an envelope, and a pen to each child, and ask him to write a letter to himself as a reminder of who God has made him to be and his identity in God. When each student finishes writing her letter, she can put it in an envelope and write her name on the outside. Collect the letters and save them until the next Remember & Celebrate weekend, when each student can open his letter and be reminded of his identity in Christ.

(Optional) Listening to the Call

Play a game where students need to listen carefully to instructions.

SUPPLIES

- Blindfold
- Chair

RELATE

Paul reminded the Ephesians of their new identity in Christ. The Ephesians didn't belong to themselves anymore; they belonged to God!

Invite kids to play a game during which they must carefully listen to instructions. To begin, choose one student to be blindfolded. Have the rest of the class stand at least 20 feet away from the blindfolded student, and put a chair down somewhere in the room. Then have the class give the blindfolded child instructions on how to get to the chair and sit in it. The blindfolded kid must listen carefully so she can make it to the chair.

Once she does, invite another student to take a turn.

Then invite the kids to sit together and discuss some questions related to the game: **Why was it important for the person who was blindfolded to listen carefully? How does it make you feel to know that God calls you His own? What are some things that might prevent you from being able to hear God’s call on your life?**

Developmentally Speaking

Children in this age group are able to perform a variety of different movements and actions at one time. Their developed motor skills will greatly help them when listening to specific instructions to direct them during the game.

BLESS// 5 min.

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 11 (see Resources)
- Name tags or blank labels (1 per child)
- Marker
- Bible

PREPARE AHEAD

On each name tag or label, write one of the following words or phrases: “royal,” “chosen,” “holy,” and “God’s special possession.”

RELATE

Gather your kids and invite them to stand in a circle together as you read 1 Peter 2:9 over them:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Go to each child and give her one of the labels or name tags. As you give each child the name tag, read the word or phrase on it by saying, (Child’s name), **may you know you are** (word or phrase on name tag).

Once you have blessed each child individually this way, have the kids stand together as you bless the entire class.

May you know you have been chosen by God. You belong to Him. May you praise Him for calling you His own.

Send home Remember Verse cards and the At Home Weekly with your kids.